

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **LOS ANGELES HIGH SCHOOL RECEIVES \$1K AWARD, PUBLIC RECOGNITION TO RAISE AWARENESS ABOUT MENTAL ILLNESS WITH LET'S ERASE THE STIGMA EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION IN PARTNERSHIP WITH LA COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH**

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**East Los Angeles, CA - (April 13, 2010)** – Students of James A. Garfield High School (GHS) will receive a \$1,000 grant award on Thursday, April 14 to recognize their advocacy in raising awareness about mental illness through the GHS Let's Erase the Stigma Club. Let's Erase the Stigma Educational Foundation (LETS)—a children's charity that empowers youth to erase the stigma of mental illness through ongoing discussions, peer-to-peer dialogue, community outreach, and leadership opportunities—will present the award on campus at 11:00 AM. LETS has partnered with the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health to provide education to youth through activities like this one.

Community leaders, the LETS Founder, and school administrators are planning to honor the LETS Club members with verbal recognition, a large check, and photos. The GHS LETS Club formed this academic year and applied for the grant to support their student-led educational project focused on “information, experience, and change in three weeks.” In this program, GHS LETS Club members spend one week sharing information they have researched about a mental illness diagnosis; the second week listening to a speaker with personal experience related to the illness; the third week volunteering or fundraising for an organization that helps people with the disability in focus; and then students begin this process again. This idea was created GHS LETS Club President Ashley Flores, an 18-year-old senior at GHS. “Knowing that at least one child is spared from the cruelty of stigma through educating those who create it keeps GHS LETS members inspired for change,” says Flores.

“These students are amazing,” says LETS Founder and Chair, Philippe Fontile, who will speak at the awards ceremony. “People keep asking me who came up with this great program at Garfield, and I tell them it was the kids. The kids are the ones who know best what it takes to erase the stigma for their generation and others. They just need the resources, a place to talk and be heard everyday, and the opportunity to pursue their ideas. They know exactly what to do.”

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Fifteen students from GHS will also receive scholarships to attend the LETS First Annual Youth Summit on May 23 at The California Endowment, an event where Dr. Stephen Hinshaw, Chair and Professor, Department of Psychology, University of California, Berkeley; and Dr. Marvin Southard, Director, Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health will speak as LETS partners. The summit will bring together 250 “Generation LETS” students from Los Angeles high schools to discuss mental illness, generate ideas for change, and begin their own “LETS Effect” in their schools. All LETS Clubs have the opportunity to apply for a LETS grant to fund creative initiatives. These youth-led projects improve the lives of children by addressing issues related to the stigma of mental illness such as bullying, teen suicide, eating disorders, depression, cutting, substance abuse, and the fear of seeking treatment.

LETS empowers young people by replacing stigma with education, prevention, and early intervention. Based out of Los Angeles and growing nationally, LETS provides Clubs and stigma-erasing activities to young people in middle schools, high schools, colleges, universities, and community centers.

#### **About Let’s Erase the Stigma Educational Foundation**

Let’s Erase the Stigma (LETS) is a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to erasing the stigma of mental illness by funding and developing educational programs, mentoring opportunities, and research possibilities designed to empower youth to change the perception of mental illness.

For more information, contact LETS at (888) 594-5387 or visit [www.lets.org](http://www.lets.org).

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